

Desert Transfiguration

When I first came to Phoenix I didn't know
the words for *absence* or *caliche*
or *heart of rose stone*. When summer burned
a hole in the sky above the cancer floor
of the VA hospital on Camelback—
when—in that small room, no bigger
than a monk's cell, my father died in my arms
as the 117 degree heat was rising
from brittle bush and saguaros, no one would tell me
what cuts into the heart
of Iron Mountain, or why shale falls like loose pearls
underneath both feet. Now when I pull my truck
off the highway, walk into the desert, past ocotillo
and cholla, jackrabbits and screech owls, I make myself
look into the piercing August sun
staring down at me
like the unblinking eye of God.

--Lois Roma-Deeley

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link to audio of Lois Roma-Deeley reading the poem and interview with the poet

<http://www.profanejournal.com/lois-roma-deeley.html>